

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 3243

As Reported by House Committee On:
Children & Family Services

Title: An act relating to the joint Task Force on the administration and delivery of services to children and families.

Brief Description: Regarding the joint Task Force on the administration and delivery of services to children.

Sponsors: Representatives Schual-Berke, Walsh, Dickerson, Haler, Darneille, Hinkle, Roberts, Pettigrew, Dunn and Kagi.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Children & Family Services: 2/2/06 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Extends the reporting date for the Joint Task Force on the Administration and Delivery of Services to Children and Families (Task Force) to December 1, 2006.
- Adds to the membership of the Task Force, a representative from the offices of the Governor, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, and the Public Defender.
- Provides for additional staffing to the Task Force.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Kagi, Chair; Roberts, Vice Chair; Walsh, Ranking Minority Member; Hinkle, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Darneille, Dickerson, Dunn, Haler and Pettigrew.

Staff: Sydney Forrester (786-7120).

Background:

In the 2005 legislative session, the Legislature created the Joint Task Force on the Administration and Delivery of Services to Children and Families (Task Force). The Task Force was directed to study two main areas:

- (1) how best to ensure that an administrative structure has defined lines of responsibility for delivering services to children and families in need; and

- 2) the best means for the public to hold government accountable for delivery of those services.

The Task Force met seven times between August and November 2005. A report from the Task Force was presented to the House Children and Family Services Committee in a work session on January 11, 2006.

The Task Force report makes three recommendations.

- (1) The Task Force should be granted an extension to meet for an additional 12 months to gather supplementary information before making final recommendations.
- (2) Membership of the Task Force should be enhanced to include a member representing the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Office of the Public Defender, and the Governor's Office.
- (3) A one-half full-time equivalent (FTE) staff or consultant position should be created and funded to provide support to the Task Force until final recommendations are submitted.

Summary of Bill:

The three recommendations of the Task Force are implemented. Three additional members will be added representing the offices of the Governor, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, and the Public Defender. Staff to the Task Force may include consultant services, and a one-half FTE will be devoted to the Task Force until its recommendations are finalized. The Task Force will submit a final report to the Legislature by December 1, 2006.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Preliminary fiscal note available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: This bill embodies the recommendations of the Task Force created by Senate Bill 5872 (2005). It is very important that this bill or the companion bill makes it to the Governor's desk. There has been much tumult of late related to the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) because of fiscal concerns, the Braam report, the new administration, etc. The Task Force recognizes it needs to allow time for the DSHS to respond to these changes before making final recommendations.

The Task Force also is requesting additional staffing support. The staffing we received was excellent, but we would like to have someone who can facilitate access to and understanding of more outside material. We would like to have a budget to continue exploring what is happening in other states with regard to organizational and structural changes that can improve delivery of services to children and families. The Task Force is comprised of members who bring diverse perspectives to the service delivery system and the group is eager to resume its work.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Schual-Berke, prime sponsor; and Laurie Lippold, Children's Home Services.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.